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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign God, thank You that Your mercies endure forever. Show us Your ways and teach us Your paths as You lead us with Your truth.

Today, set the hearts of our lawmakers on Heaven's way. In all of their actions, may they seek Your celestial approval. Remind them that You are the only constituent they absolutely must please. May our Senators stand on Your promises and lean on Your grace.

Lord, thank You for Your mercy. You lift the lowly, satisfy the thirsty, and fill the hungry with good things.

And, Lord, thank You for the faithfulness of our summer pages.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 28, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HELLER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2018

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2) to provide for the reform and continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2023, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Roberts amendment No. 3224, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Thune) amendment No. 3134 (to amendment No. 3224), to modify conservation reserve program provisions.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

RETIREMENT OF JUSTICE ANTHONY KENNEDY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I want to take another opportunity to pay tribute to Justice Anthony Kennedy, who announced yesterday that he will retire from active service and assume senior status at the end of July.

Justice Kennedy deserves our sincere thanks for his service and our congratulations on a truly remarkable ca-

reer. He served our Nation on the Federal Bench for 43 years, 30 of which he spent as an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

His contributions to American jurisprudence have been many. In particular, he has earned our gratitude for his steadfast defense of the vital First Amendment right to political speech.

We congratulate Justice Kennedy, his wife Mary, and their entire family on this well-earned retirement. We wish them every happiness during the additional time they will get to spend together in the years ahead.

FILLING THE UPCOMING SUPREME COURT VACANCY

As I stated yesterday, the Senate stands ready to fulfill our constitutional role by offering advice and consent on President Trump's nominee to fill the vacancy that Justice Kennedy's retirement will create. The Senate will vote to confirm Justice Kennedy's successor this fall.

This is not 2016. There aren't the final months of a second-term, constitutionally lame duck Presidency with a Presidential election fast approaching. We are right in the middle of this President's very first term.

To my knowledge, nobody on either side has either suggested before yesterday that the Senate should process Supreme Court nominations only in odd-numbered years. The situation today is much like when Justice Kagan was confirmed in 2010 and when Justice Breyer was confirmed in 1994 and Justice Souter in 1990. In each case, the President was about a year and a half into his first term.

So just as on numerous other occasions, the process to confirm Justice Kennedy's successor will take place this year. As in the case of Justice Gorsuch, Senators will have the opportunity to meet with President Trump's nominee, examine his or her qualifications, and debate the nomination. I am confident Chairman GRASSLEY will capably lead the Judiciary Committee

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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